



## Podcast 3: Vetting and Selecting High-Quality Supplementary Homework Help and Tutoring Materials

Andrew: Welcome to Y4Y's Podcast series, "Structuring Successful Homework Help and Tutoring Sessions!" I'm Andrew, and I'm a member of the You for Youth (Y4Y) Technical Assistance Team. In this series, we will interview out-of-school time professionals about their experience in helping youth get the most out of their homework help and tutoring sessions. Joining us today for our third podcast are Myra and Shannon, both Site Coordinators with different organizations. They're here to discuss leveraging classroom resources and selecting supplementary materials to support students during their homework help or tutoring sessions.

Andrew: Thank you so much for joining us today, ladies!

Shannon and Myra: Thank you for having us./ So happy to be here.

Andrew: So, you both have some recent best practices to share with our audience on how you've improved your homework and tutoring sessions in out-of-school time. Shannon let's start with you and just dive in! What prompted you to focus on this area of programming?

Shannon: Yeah, so, a couple years ago our homework facilitator wasn't always sure what students were working on or what students should do once they've completed their homework. Since helping our students succeed in the school day is crucial, this was missing out on an opportunity to support our students master skills as well as take advantage of some possible extra learning time. So I recognized that we needed to strengthen our homework and tutoring sessions and I knew that Myra had just gone through some of those same issues, so I reached out for advice.

Myra: That's right. We had just had to expand the resources used in our afterschool site because it was our program's first-time supporting students learning English. As it turned out, all our students benefited from the expansion.

Andrew: How exactly did you expand your resources? Can you also share some techniques you used to improve academics?

Myra: Absolutely. First, we worked on leveraging resources from school-day teachers. Unfortunately, the school only had enough hard copy materials for the school-day so we couldn't borrow any. But we were able to view electronic textbooks and workbooks. By building off of school-day curriculum resources that we knew met the high-quality standards set by the district, we were confident we would be aligning our efforts with school-day learning.

Shannon: I have to say, this was probably the best advice Myra gave me! I hadn't realized that schools had access to electronic copies of the curriculum. She and I had this great conversation where she led me through the process of gaining access to the materials. And it turned out even though we're in the same district, because some of the licensing was more building specific, I couldn't even just use what she already had. So, I would really recommend to your listeners that they reach out to their principals if they're in the same boat we were, because each school may have their own links and codes to access the material.



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Andrew: So, Shannon, did you feel like those school-day resources were going to be all you needed to improve the quality of your homework and tutoring sessions?

Shannon: Funny you should ask, because that was one of our biggest concerns! We really didn't want our out-of-school time to look and feel like just an extension of the school day, even though we were using some of the same material, so I asked Myra what other suggestions she had.

Myra: Yeah, we felt the same way when we were reflecting on how we wanted to improve our sessions. So, I went to the EL and Special Education Lead Teachers in our building. In my experience, those two departments have a wealth of resources that are connected to the school-day curriculum. We asked them for guidance on which additional workbooks and books to purchase. They also shared some websites where we could find curricula supplements in Spanish, like the student workbook and other reading materials. These resources spanned all of our students' reading levels, so we could meet students where they were – where they *are* – with materials still aligned to the curriculum.

Andrew: That's really great to hear that your program thought to expand your resource search beyond the classroom teachers to your specialist educators. Here at Y4Y we always advocate for rounding out many aspects of programming by consulting them. So, with these additional resources on board, did either of you have to consider additional staff training?

Shannon: Yeah, I can answer that. We followed Myra's steps and actually reached out to the teachers for the students who receive English language supports or Special Education supports in our building. We learned through them that there was ongoing training throughout the year and some of that was geared specifically to new teachers. So, we requested and were granted permission to send several of our staff to those trainings. So, the Site Facilitators learned how to include multiple media such as drawings, illustrations, storyboards, music, dance and movement, visual arts, and videos into homework experiences. This really came in handy during our stretches of exclusively virtual learning. We also learned this process that we needed to buy tangible items that match vocabulary. For example, we purchased animal figures, blocks and picture books to support science, math and English language homework.

Andrew: Wow, that's a lot of progress! Myra, do you have anything to add?

Myra: Yeah, absolutely! In our program we also learned about translation services and interactive web tools which allow students to brainstorm, think and try out ideas in their first language. Then, we had them translate their work which could be double-checked by the translation tool.

Andrew: It sounds like you both had a lot of success in getting students actively engaged and excited about learning – not only in your homework help and tutoring program but throughout your entire program.

Myra: We definitely did. Our school-day partners keep telling us that our program students are doing much better academically and they're more willing to engage in conversation. Within our program, we've watched them show a lot more interest in learning. Maybe even more exciting for



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me, is that we've seen them grow socially and emotionally in addition to their academic growth since we've implemented these strategies.

Andrew: What rewarding outcomes you have both enjoyed in your programs! I just wanted to share with listeners this quick list of suggested steps that you were kind enough to provide to Y4Y for our listeners who are looking to improve their homework and tutoring sessions with a focus on supporting academics. You recommended that they:

- Leverage what the district or districts of your students have adopted and asked for access to online resources they are using in class
- Check out online resources posted by your state department of education
- Go to nonprofit organizations like Khan Academy and Smithsonian Institute
- Preview and utilize each resource as if you were a student, and
- Check to make sure the content selected aligns with program goals and objectives.

Shannon: Yeah, and thank you for sharing that. This was one of the things that Myra and I talked extensively about and still speak with other programs around how to select and utilize various resources in your homework help and tutoring program. Learners differ so much, no single resource will be optimal for all learners. What's essential is that you're considering the diversity of interests and perspectives, the various abilities, learning styles, and maturity levels of the youth you serve as you select those items.

Myra: Exactly. And the selection of supplementary materials and resources to support the homework help and tutoring program is an ongoing process that should include removing materials that are outdated or no longer appropriate, and replacing worn-out materials that are still of educational value with updated ones. Don't forget the important step of training staff appropriately in the new materials. Remember, it's important to think about the specific needs and interests of the students along with alternative approaches to both how staff facilitate the learning and how students demonstrate their learning.

Andrew: Shannon, Myra, you have given our audience SO much to think about when they're ready to take an even more intentional path with their homework and tutoring sessions. I wanted to add that with this Click & Go, Y4Y has developed academic tools for support in vetting and selecting high-quality resources. Thank you again for joining us.

Shannon and Myra in unison: Thank you, so glad to be here./ Glad to be helpful.

Andrew: And thank you, listeners, for making Y4Y your partner in professional development.